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many Syrians and Palestinians, teachers, government officials and political exiles, who thronged Baghdad in the first years of the war. To the general Arab unrest there were added particular Iraqi grievances; and both were encouraged to express themselves violently by the comparative failure of British arms in 1940 and 1941 and the great though temporary influence of German propaganda. Finally, when the general position of the war seemed most propitious, Rashid Ali raised the banner of revolt. He was supported by some, although by no means all, of the nationalists in other Arab countries; in imagination they saw the revolt not as a seizure of power by the Army but as a protest of the Arabs against British policy in Palestine and French in Syria. When the revolt failed, a wave of doubt and self-criticism swept over the nationalist ranks, in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, no less than in Iraq.

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These events were swiftly followed by others of even greater import. Ever since the French capitulation German agents had been active in Syria and Lebanon. In the first months of 1941 German influence was thought to be increasing rapidly and alarmingly; and it was believed that the completion of her Balkan campaign had brought nearer the possibility of a gradual infiltration of German troops and agents into the French Mandated Territories, until finally Germany would be able to obtain complete control of them. Her forces would then be in a position to threaten the British armies in Palestine and Egypt, and Turkey to the north.

The danger was brought to a head by the outbreak of the Iraqi insurrection in May. German aircraft were permitted by the Government of Vichy to use Syrian air-bases as stages on their journey to Iraq; and it was obvious to those who had studied German methods of infiltration that this was the beginning of a process which would, unless forestalled, soon take on such proportions that to check it would be of the greatest difficulty.

It therefore came as no surprise to the general public when June 8th, 1941, a mixed force of Imperial, Free French and other Allied troops crossed the frontiers of Syria and Lebanon; the whole force was under the command of General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and the Free French contingent under that

of General Catroux. General Dentz's troops put up an unexpectedly strong resistance. It had been generally hoped that it would be nominal or else would be overcome without much difficulty, on account of the supposed bad state of morale among the French troops, the alleged poor condition of their equipment, the repatriation of a large part of the army of the Levant to France after the Armistice, the defection of a number of officers and men to the Free French cause, and the pro-British sympathies of certain elements in the population. This hope was not fulfilled. General Dentz's troops resisted strongly, for a number of reasons: because of hostility to Great Britain and Free France and suspicion of their intentions; from professional pride and the desire to wipe out the shame of the French capitulation of 1940; because the policy of Vichy included the defence of the Empire against all attacks upon it; and because of severe disciplinary measures taken by General Dentz in the weeks preceding the attack.

The Allied advance was made in several columns, some of which entered the country from Palestine and Transjordan in the south, and the others from Iraq in the east. Of the columns advancing from the south, one took the coastal road, with Beirut as its goal; a second went northwards from Metullah into the region beneath the western slopes of Hermon, heading towards the Biqa', the valley between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, in which lies the air-base of Rayaq; a third advanced towards Damascus by way of Quneitra; and others towards Damascus through the Hauran. Of the columns which invaded Syria from Iraq, one struck across the desert towards Palmyra and then towards Homs and the roads and railway which run north and south connecting the great towns of the interior; another moved up the course of the Euphrates towards Dair az-Zor and then south-west to Palmyra; and a third westwards along the northern frontier, towards Aleppo. The northward and westward movements tended to converge as the columns moved forward, pushing the enemy forces before them towards the north-western section of the country. In the first days of the campaign the forces from the south captured Sur, Dera' and Merjayun and advanced beyond them. But the further they went the fiercer the resistance to them grew; they captured Kiswe, a few miles south of Damascus, but there they were halted, while the French forces launched a counter-attack and on June 16th recaptured

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726 648 Quneitra and Merjayun. They were dislodged from the former in a few hours, but from the latter only after more than a week of heavy fighting on June 24th. By that time the other columns had made considerable progress; on June 20th the deciding battle for Damascus was fought. An Indian brigade penetrated after hard fighting into the suburbs of Mezze to the west of Damascus; the Australians following in support took Fort Gouraud. In the face of this threat from the west and pressure from Free French columns to the south and east General Dentz ordered the evacuation of the city. Free French troops under Colonel Collet led the Allied entry of June 21st. In the next few days a rapid advance was made north of Damascus by Allied troops, while those moving westwards through the desert drew nearer to the railway and Aleppo, Homs and Hama; and those on the coastal road continued their approach upon Beirut, in spite of heavy resistance at Damur and elsewhere.

By the beginning of July the end of the campaign was in sight. On July 8th General Dentz was forced to ask for terms; and after several days of negotiations, an Armistice Convention was initialled at Acre on July 12th and signed on the 14th. Allied forces were to occupy Syrian and Lebanese territory; the French forces were to be accorded the full honours of war; all war material was either to be transferred to the British authorities or to be destroyed under their supervision; prisoners of war were to be released; the free choice between rallying to the Allied cause and being repatriated was to be left to individuals on the French side; the rights of French cultural institutions were to be respected; all public services, means of communication, port installations, naval establishments, ships, aircraft, air installations, and equipment and fuel stocks were to be handed over intact; and no reprisals were to be taken by the British authorities against Syrians or Lebanese who had been involved in the recent hostilities in a military or official capacity. The execution of the Convention was to be supervised by a commission of control, of which three members, including the President, were to be nominated by the British authorities and the other two by the Vichy French authorities.[1]

[1] See Appendix A13.